1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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Chapter Two

THE SNOWBALL STATE

1. Manipulation 2. Age-sets 3. Officers of State 4. Continually segmenting systems 5. Lineage systems compared 6. Splitting the State 7. Stability

1. *Manipulation*

In our first chapter we outlined some of the more significant events in Ngoni history prior to the arrival of Europeans. In this chapter we shall examine the political system within which these events took place. It is not the task of social analysis to determine why these or any other events occurred. What we shall attempt is a discussion of how they occurred, and what were the principal social relations involved in them.

Most of the incidents referred to in the first chapter concerned the State as a whole or the royal family. Nevertheless, when we begin to consider the conditions under which the State endured we have to discuss the social position of ordinary men and women within the State. For the Ngoni State held together as an organized social group, and on occasion failed to hold together, not merely because Zwangendaba was a good leader or his sons quarrelsome or his brothers ambitious, or because his people were bound by custom and knew no better, but also, and in our view mainly, because the State was a viable social entity in its time and place. The arrangement of people into segments and age-sets was not a mere formal and static division, but a means whereby a motley heterogeneous collection of individuals was converted into an organized society with agreed aims. The structure of the State had rules; in other words there was regularity in its social processes. Yet it was a structure which, within these rules, could be manipulated. The structure could be, and was, utilized by individuals for the realization of their private ends at the expense of others as well as providing for the common good. This is probably true of all social systems. We shall begin our analysis by examining the ways in which this manipulation was carried out.

In most societies, from the simplest system of hunting bands to the complex societies of the modern world, one of the most significant sets of rights are those relating to fixed natural resources. The structure of rights in land provides a key to the structure of society.

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and the Ngoni did not seek to vanquish other tribes as states but rather to exhaust them by continued attrition. In later years it appears that a few minor chiefs who lived near the Fort Jameson group did manage to come to some agreement with it, for the Ngoni seem to have raided them only sporadically although warriors passed through their territories *en route* for more distant objectives; but this may have been due to the intervention of European traders. The powerful Cewa chief, Mwase Kasungu, may also have come to some arrangement with the Fort Jameson group even as he did with the Ngoni of northern Nyasaland.

Thus for the most part the external relations of the Ngoni State were warlike. The Ngoni did not trade with their neighbours, or send ambassadors to them, or enter into alliances with them; they merely killed or captured them.[10] The army was organized on a basis of age-sets, but the age-sets as such did not enter into political relations with their enemies. They merely e[illegible]d the policy of the State or of the major segment to which they belonged.

3. *Officers of State*

The residential and age-set systems formed the structure of the State and there was no separate administrative system. There was little specialization of function among those who wielded power in the State, and those who did have special governmental tasks were all the lords of large segments.

The nearest approach to special political officers is to be found among the regional governors. A few of Zwangendaba's followers were with him from the beginning of his journey from Natal. Some of these were his agnates, but the descendants of others have now forgotten what relationship, if any, they bore to him. These early followers did not stand in the lord-lieutenant relationship to Zwangendaba, for in Ngoni usage all lieutenants were captives, or the descendants of captives, of their lords. They were organized in segments in the same way as everyone else, but the heads of some of these segments were known by the special term *mulumuzana* which I have translated as regional governor. Segments headed by regional governors were attached like other large segments to the various royal headquarters, and thus became primary divisions of the segments formed for queens. They differed from the lieutenants of the royal headquarters not only in their title but also in the greater freedom they were allowed in their segments. They kept their own villages separate from the royal villages to which they were attached politically.

[10] See pp. 25*f*.

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is quite possible for the sub-divisions of a centralized state to have a segmentary social organization'.[88]

This unfortunate muddle is not helped by the use of the adjective pyramidal to characterize the social organization of primitive states, for when we need a visual symbol for a segmentary system as found in stateless societies, we use a triangle or pyramid.[89] There is, on reflection, an obvious difference between one office-holder having authority over a number of subordinates and one segment containing lesser segments within itself; but this difference is obscured by the similarities of spatial metaphor.

Under these circumstances, it seems best to eschew the use of pyramidal or segmentary as unqualified descriptions of either group of societies, and to follow the authors' alternative suggestion by speaking of Group A societies as primitive states, and of those in Group B as stateless societies. The presence or absence of a segmentary political system may now be handled as a separate question, providing a classification cutting across the division into states and stateless societies.

We have spoken throughout this chapter of Ngoni society as a state, and this usage is in accord with the definition of a state given here. The Paramount Chief with his lieutenants exercised supreme authority, there was a highly organized administrative machine, and there was an organized method of settling disputes within the State. There were only slight variations in wealth except in the control of cattle, but privilege and status were expressed in the residential system and were inseparable from the exercise of power and authority.

The presence or absence of a segmentary political system can itself be divided into two questions; was there a segmentary system, and if so, was it the political system? If we have used the term segment correctly, then it is clear that the Ngoni did have a segmentary system, and that political relations within, but not without, the State were largely regulated by it. However, when Fortes and Evans-Pritchard use this word segmentary in their typology they are referring exclusively to lineage segments, or to major groups very similar in form to lineages. A segment of the Ngoni residential system was not quite the same as a segment of a lineage, and we must therefore examine what may usefully be meant by the term segmentary as applied to a social system before we can answer these questions.

[88] Fortes, *Dynamics*, p. 234.

[89] e.g. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, p. 201, and Fortes, *Dynamics*, p. 34, diagrams.

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procedure. Segment 2 broke away from segment 3 and later rejoined it peaceably, but other instances of fission were accompanied by fighting. The leader of each divergent group rallied his warriors, the one to protect his flight, the other to pursue and annihilate the departing traitors. If the flight was successful, the leader of the new State assumed the salutations and marks of rank of a Paramount Chief and held his own first fruits ceremony. The internal organization of his State and of the one he had left continued on the same lines as before. This seems to have been the sequence of events when Zulu Gama, Chwele Ndhlovu, and segment 7 each broke away from the main body. When the residue of segment 1 broke away from segment 4, the dissident group destroyed the crops of those who remained, but Chibambo does not mention fighting on that occasion.[49] There are two possible instances of a divergent group going away to join some other state. Segment 7 was associated for a while with Mirambo and his Rugaruga, and Zulu Gama joined forces in Tanganyika with the Maseko Ngoni, now in southern Nyasaland.[50] But neither of these alliances lasted long. As we would expect there is less evidence for the unsuccessful attempts at fission which it seems reasonable to assume must have taken place. I did, however, collect one clear account of a regional governor who was thought by Zwangendaba to be lagging behind on the migration with the intention of deserting with his segment. Zwangendaba sent an army against the regional governor, who was killed. His segment, under the charge of his son, was forced to live in the village of a lieutenant of Zwangendaba's father. It is said that Zwangendaba continued to punish the would-be rebels by drafting members of the segment to other parts of the residential system from time to time.

Thus in one sense the State was held together by armed force. Certainly there were mystical values associated with the chieftainship. It is now difficult to gain much precise information on this topic but it is apparent from present-day practice and from comparative evidence that the chiefly office was hedged about with mystical sanctions and that the chief was no mere secular ruler. Yet it is also clear that these values were associated with the office of chieftainship rather than with the particular occupant of the office, and that they were linked to successful military achievement. We might also suggest that because so many men became Ngoni only after they had grown up in quite different cultures, mystical

[49] Chibambo, *My Ngoni*, p. 34.
[50] Bradley, *Livingstone*, p. 289, and *Dark Continent*, i, p. 499; Hatchell, 'Angoni', *passim*.

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sanctions were less effective than they are in more homogeneous societies; but this can hardly be proved. The fact remains that some segments did break off, that the State attempted to annihilate them, and that sometimes they were successful, probably sometimes not. The transition was sharp between the condition in which a segment was an integral loyal part of the State and that in which it was itself a new State. Spatially a State was surrounded by a no-man's-land. Everything inside the uninhabited ring of country was in the State, everything outside it was not. Within the State there was no feuding such as sometimes characterizes societies whose political boundaries are not uniquely defined. In Ngoni society, murder was punished by the State, and the cattle paid by the murderer's kin were handed over to the Paramount Chief, not to the kin of the murdered man. The Paramount Chief, it is true, usually handed on the cattle to them, but the method of settlement is indicative of the power of the State. There was only one national first fruits ceremony, accompanied by summary penalties of death for those whose actions threatened its mystical effectiveness, as for example by singing the ceremonial songs at the wrong time. Furthermore, there was a single age-set system, in which the members of each set were drawn from all segments, and because of the activities of the sets, the segments united in aggression against the external world.

When a split threatened, the issue was decided by force of arms. Yet in a quite significant sense the cohesion of the State was not based on force at all. The Paramount Chief had no monopoly of force, for as we have seen there were representatives of every major segment in each age-set, and any lord who could claim the loyal support of his segment had at his disposal a fighting force as efficient as that of anyone else. Within the army there was little or no technical, as distinct from tactical, specialization and the Paramount Chief had no bodyguard or other specially recruited force on which he could rely. The Ngoni were contemptuous of guns, for the Tower muskets used by the Arabs and others could not penetrate their shields at normal firing range, and such guns as the Ngoni possessed were used only for making a noise.[48] There was no strong central power posed against the provincial lords, as in some societies. The strength of any segment was measured by its internal cohesion, its size and fighting ability, as matched against the cohesion, size and ability of the forces that could be marshalled against it. While he was loyal, expansion in a man's segment

[48] Wiese, 'Expedicão', p. 477, and 'Geschichte', p. 196; Read, 'Tradition', p. 481, [illegible]; Young, *History*, p. 125.

1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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651 marriages and for selling beer, and from fines and fees taken in court. In some years there has been a local levy on all men liable for Native tax.

642 The Native Authority, the Native Court and the Native Treasury form a single system of what is essentially local government. The judicial aspect of government has always been to the 693 fore, for the hearing of cases is an activity which has gone on without serious interruption since before the conquest. The first people to be appointed as assessors were in many instances the people who had been hearing cases with the chief for many years. They were joined in this by the councillors, for there was no separation between judicial and administrative organization in pre-conquest times and none had emerged by that time. Since the court clerk needed to be at least partially literate, he was usually a younger man who had been to school but, in some instances at least, he had close kinship ties with those in high office. He acted as a member of the bench as much as the councillors and assessors. In some courts other close supporters of the chief, particularly those who lived near their courts, also attended regularly to hear cases although they were not paid to do so, and in at least one instance a chief paid a regular salary out of his own pocket to a member of his court who was not recognized as such by the Administration.

Thus the court was the nucleus round which the Native Authority grew. The court clerk was employed as secretary to the chief and the Native Authority, and he had charge of the rubber stamps which came to be the new symbols of political power. He toured the county looking for dogs and bicycles without licences, for since he was literate he was considered the man to handle the money accruing from court fines, fees and licences. Sometimes he combined with these duties others that had nothing to do with court work, such as seeing that villages were swept clean or paths hoed. Because of his work in court he was well informed on disputes in the county, and since he made frequent trips to the township so that his accounts could be checked by the Administration, he was well informed on what was going on there. The office of court clerk 1554 came in this way to have a greater importance than its formal duties implied.

Yet in recent years the relative status of the court clerk has declined. The executive, as opposed to the judicial and fiscal, 648 functions of the Native Authority have become more numerous. 645 The activities of the Administration, instead of being confined mainly to tax collecting and the punishment of major crimes, have expanded to include a variety of social services for Africans and

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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II

CHAPTER II

THE NGONI KINGDOMS

In 1933, by the Native Authorities Ordinance and the Native Courts Ordinance, Mbelwa was recognized as Paramount of the northern Ngoni kingdom with six Subordinate Native Authorities under him, and his court was constituted the appeal court for their six courts. The same procedure was followed in the central kingdom for Paramount Gomani with six Subordinate Native Authorities, and his court as the appeal court for their courts. They were the only rulers in Nyasaland with S.N.A.[1] under them. Two other chiefs, Cikulamayembe of the Henga in Mzimba district and Kyungu of the Ngonde in North Nyasa district, had respectively four and five courts subordinate to them, but the chiefs owning these courts were not recognized as their subordinates. The Ngoni comment on these ordinances was 'Ha! Now they see what big chiefs we have. Only our chiefs are called *inkosi*.'

The northern kingdom was in Mzimba district, and Paramount Mbelwa's royal village was at the southern end of his kingdom. The central kingdom included the whole of Ncheu district with Paramount Gomani's royal village at the northern end. This kingdom had Portuguese territory on its western frontier, close to the royal village. When the Portuguese boundary was fixed in 1891, the Ngoni kingdom under the Maseko Paramount was cut in two and a section under a Maseko ruler became a separate kingdom under the Portuguese. There was constant trouble in the 1930's over this Portuguese frontier, for Gomani's Ngoni visited their relatives, grazed their cattle and hoed gardens on the Portuguese side; and from time to time claims by the Portuguese for rent for gardens and grazing lands and disputes about taxation, needed judicious handling in the District Commissioner's court.

The figures in Table II for Mzimba and Ncheu districts in 1926, 1931, and 1945 show the changes in the ethnic composition of the districts, some of which are difficult to account for. In Mzimba district the Tumbuka and hence the northern Ngoni kingdom did not include all the 156,208 in the district. In Ncheu, the total district population of 87,690 were all included in the central Ngoni kingdom, showing the mixed ethnic elements, among which the Ngoni, or those who were enumerated as Ngoni, had declined from 64,023 in 1926 to 15,242 in 1945. Between 1931 and 1945 the decrease in the number of Ngoni (31,066) was almost balanced by the increase in the number of Nyanja

[1] This abbreviation will be used henceforward in referring to Subordinate Native Authorities.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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Ngoni, he was welcomed everywhere as one who could speak with authority about the culture and customs of his people, and the central Ngoni, when talking about their history and customs, wanted him to realise that they too were 'real Ngoni' (*Ngoni esi esi*). The general relationships before 1939 were that the political separation between the kingdoms and their secession states was accepted as final. On the social and cultural level, the Ngoni from one state sought contacts with the Ngoni from another state or kingdom in preference to contacts with other ethnic groups. In using the term Ngoni in this context, as throughout this book, I am referring to people with Swazi and trans-Zambesi clan descent names.

THE MAIN POLITICAL ELEMENTS IN THE NGONI KINGDOMS

The District Commissioner of Ncheu in his report for 1935, after the Native Administration Ordinance had been in operation for over a year, wrote of the central Ngoni kingdom: 'The tribal system is, comparatively speaking, intact under a chief who commands universal respect.'[1] The political system of the Ngoni in both kingdoms was based on a ruling aristocracy in which the Paramount of the royal clan was the head, supported by influential members of his own clan and of other leading clans. There were three main elements in this ruling aristocracy: the Paramount, with whose office was linked provision for a regency at the death of the incumbent and during the minority of his successor; the subordinate chiefs who ruled under him in recognised areas; and the heads of Swazi clans called *abamnumzane*. I shall use these terms, chiefs and *abamnumzane*, when speaking of the Ngoni kingdoms. In the northern kingdom all six chiefs were of the royal clan. In the central kingdom none of the six chiefs were of the royal clan but, with one exception, all were recognised as *abamnumzane*. This distribution of authority among the six chiefs under the Paramount in the northern kingdom meant that several of the leading *abamnumzane* felt excluded from political control of the villages and area which they were said to 'own', because they had no recognised court. This led at times to friction between them and the chiefs of the royal clan. In the central kingdom the position was different, for though some *abamnumzane* were recognised as chiefs, others were not, and friction occurred at times between the chiefs and other *abamnumzane*, and also between the chiefs and members of the royal clan. In both areas allegiance to the Paramount was, however, a strong unifying element.

The ruling aristocracy was in its turn supported by a hierarchy of officials, some traditional, some appointed to meet modern requirements

[1] *Annual Report of the Provincial Commissioner for the Nyasaland Protectorate*, 1935, p. 50.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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with the military organization and the Paramountcy. The main emphasis in the study is, however, on the Ngoni kingdoms in the 1930's, when the Paramount and the administrative organization under him were recognized by the Nyasaland government. Though certain elements in the kingdoms, as for example the position and authority of the *ahwusana*, were not recognized by the ordinance, the supreme authority of the Paramounts and the position of their appeal courts received additional support from the colonial officials, from the financial basis of the administration, and from the many new responsibilities of the Paramount for his people illustrated by the bye-laws made and the welfare measures carried out.

It is the Ngoni kingdoms as they functioned in the 1930's which will be compared with other African political systems, bearing in mind all the time that behind the Ngoni kingdoms lay the authority and power of the colonial government. The comparison will be made with the general characteristics of what were called by the editors of *African Political Systems*, in their introductory essay, 'Group A systems', and the references will be to the criteria and concepts in that introduction.

The main characteristics cited of the Group A systems were all to be found in the Ngoni kingdoms: centralized authority, administrative machinery and judicial institutions. These will be the chief material in Part II of this book on the Ngoni political system. In *African Political Systems* the editors stated that all the societies described in the book which were in the category of Group A systems were 'an amalgam of different peoples, each aware of its unique origin and history, and all except the Zulu and Bemba are still today culturally heterogenous'. Such a definition was appropriate for the Ngoni kingdoms, where political authority was wielded over several different peoples, as the ethnic grouping in the 1945 census showed, and where there was cultural heterogeneity among the different peoples. This second characteristic will be examined more fully in Chapter III of this section, dealing with Ngoni culture. To the factor of diversity within the Ngoni kingdoms should be added one other point made by the editors towards the end of their introduction where they said: 'Community of language and culture does not necessarily give rise to political unity, any more than linguistic and cultural dissimilarity prevents political unity.' In the next chapter we shall be discussing the relation of language and culture among the Ngoni, and between them and other Nyasaland peoples. The second point in the essay which is also applicable to the Ngoni kingdoms and their neighbours was stated in these terms: 'The overlapping and interlocking of societies is due to the fact that where political relations end is not the point at which all social relations cease.' The relevance of this statement to the Ngoni in Nyasaland has already been mentioned in connexion with the visiting which goes on between individuals from the Ngoni kingdoms and states. It

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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was still more clearly demonstrated by the attitude of the Ngoni 'of the dispersion', who returned for visits, some frequently and others at varying intervals, to their former homes though they were no longer in a political sense subjects of the Ngoni Paramount.

In the Group A systems, not only is the Paramount the political head of a culturally and ethnically heterogeneous state, but he is also a territorial ruler, and everyone living within the boundaries of his state is his subject. This was peculiarly a characteristic of the so-called conquest states, when effective administrative control was established within recognised boundaries after the conquest or surrender of neighbouring peoples. In the chapter on the military organization of the Ngoni, it will be seen how the nature of the military tenure of *alumusana*, and the relation of groups of conquered villages known as *amilaga* to the central villages of the Paramount and *alumusana*, emphasized the limits within which Ngoni authority was effective. One of the often repeated grievances of the older Ngoni was that the Europeans 'arrived too soon', before the Ngoni were able to establish effective authority over the whole country.

Two further points emerge in the introductory essay to *African Political Systems* which relate to the balance of forces within the Group A type of state and to the position of the Paramount. Both these points will be illustrated in Part II. The first concerns the relationship of the subordinate chiefs (called 'local chiefs' in the essay) to the central authority. They represented the central authority in the areas where they ruled, and they represented the people under them and their needs to the central authority. When the older Ngoni were talking about the Paramount in pre-European days, much emphasis was laid on his control of the chiefs and *alumusana*, and on the obligation they felt to visit the Paramount in his village frequently, in order that they might appear to be carrying out his orders and not usurping undue authority. The older Ngoni also laid stress on the accessibility of the Paramount to all his people, provided—and it was an important proviso—that a man came to him with an intermediary, either his headman or his *mukamusana*.

The final point of comparison between Group A systems and the Ngoni kingdoms is the mystical values bound up with kingship. This will be discussed in the chapter on the Paramount (Chapter II, Part II) and it is related also to the ancestor cult. The Ngoni Paramounts were more than ruling monarchs; they were the symbol of the unity of their state; in pre-European days the Paramount was the head of the army; and the ritual at the accession and at the death of a Paramount was related to the fertility of the land and the prosperity of the people.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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CHAPTER I

THE MILITARY FOUNDATIONS OF THE NGONI KINGDOMS

After the Ngoni settled in Nyasaland their political system went through three main periods of change and development up to 1939. The first was that of pre-European days, characterized by the military kingdoms. The second was the period of direct British administration, when the chief features of the Ngoni kingdoms were latent and unrecognized. The third was the period from 1933 onwards when the passing of the Native Authority and Native Courts Ordinances gave recognition to certain traditional forms of the Ngoni political system. Since, in their early forms, from the middle of the nineteenth century onward, the Ngoni kingdoms were founded on conquest, the maintenance of military power both for defence and aggression was an essential condition of their survival. We shall therefore begin the examination of the Ngoni political system with a chapter on their military organization. Men of the Swazi and of trans-Zambesi clans were proud of the part their fathers and grandfathers had played in Ngoni wars. These wars were recalled to the people in the recitals of oral tradition and in the songs and dances which were part of Ngoni culture. Cibambo, who has already been mentioned as the historian of his people, wrote for me in English the following account of Ngoni warfare in the old days, part of which, written in Tumbuka, was used as a reader for the schools in the Livingstonia Mission area. Cibambo had, as a young boy, seen the preparations for war, and had gone more than once as a carrier for his elder brothers who belonged to one of the last formed regiments.

Ngoni Warfare in Old Days

1 To the Ngoni war was like work and his heart rejoiced to think of it. When the old men sat in the kraal the talk that roused discussion was of war and their journeyings. All the heroes of the tribe had received their praise-greetings through service in war. In this, ordinary people and slaves came together, for though they might have been unknown to begin with, if they were heroes in one or two wars the whole country knew them. The slaves who showed their courage and strength in war quickly received their freedom and many also had villages of their own because of the people they had captured in war; others obtained the standing of men in authority. Those who were cowards were humiliated and laughed at, and those who had not entered the enemy stockade or killed a man were not allowed to dance in triumph in the kraal but only to join in the *ligubo* dance along with others.

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3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
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353 592 [562] women's. For all ceremonies the men sat on the right side, and the women on the left, the place of honour for the leading man and woman being by the main door-posts. No young man or woman ever thought of sitting near them. The other place of significance lay between the fire and the back of the hut on the right-hand side; it was known as the [778] [769] 'place of the spirits', the 'ancestors' corner', where the baskets and spears and other ritual objects were kept which were used in the ancestral cult. Only the owner of the hut or those taking part in the ritual could approach this corner.

In this land, into the cultural pattern of Ngoni village and household life, the Ngoni children were born. In such villages and homes they passed their earlier years, and grew from boys and girls to young adults.

The Ngoni kingdoms

642 When the Ngoni made parts of Nyasaland their homeland they set up conquest states on the pattern which they had been familiar with in southern Africa. Where they settled, [721] they either conquered the local peoples who lived in that area, or accepted their submission. Until the British ad- [648] ministration was established the Ngoni carried on wars and raids against neighbouring peoples to enlarge the boundaries of their kingdoms. As a conquest state, similar to that of the [162] Ndebele in Southern Rhodesia, the population of the Ngoni kingdoms was of mixed origin, some whose ancestors came from Natal, some from the territories passed through on their northward march, and some from Nyasaland itself.

The kingdoms were organized on a centralized pattern [643] with the Paramount Chief as supreme ruler and subordinate chiefs under him. The Ngoni code of law operated in the [671] courts of the chiefs, and, as they proudly said, 'there was [692] one law for all people'. Military service was required from [702] all young men, and each territorial chief had to bring his [681] quota of warriors to the Paramount's village when a war 000 summons went out. Military service, obedience to the law,

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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Stated very briefly, the problem is this: an Ngoni aristocratic minority created an Ngoni 'state' of mixed ethnic units, imposed a national identity on all who formed part of it, and inspired a real 'national feeling' among those who were assimilated. In this article I propose to look at this problem as it exists to-day in the light of white contact, and more particularly as a prelude to Indirect Rule. My thesis is that Ngoni 'national feeling' is based on the traditions of their past—on the story of their southern origin, their trek from the south, and their settlement in their present areas. I shall show how the continued preservation of their distinctive institutions, together with their strong historical sense, gave them a dominant position in the country, which was enforced through their military and political supremacy. This supremacy was first challenged and then overthrown by the arrival of the Europeans and the defeat of the Ngoni military power. The situation thus created is the key to the Ngoni attitude towards white contact to-day.

The plan of work which I adopted at the beginning had as its aim the establishing of certain essential data—namely, to determine the principles of local or territorial settlement in relation to the political organization and the ethnic constitution of the area. This involved making maps of the Paramount Chief's 'country' and of the 'countries' of his subordinate chiefs, showing the areas over which individuals exercised authority and their relation to those above and below them in the political hierarchy. It also involved making a number of village plans, showing the alignment of houses on the village site, the names and clans of the inhabitants and their mutual relations in terms of kinship groups and village organization.[1] In villages called Ngoni villages, that is, where the 'owner' of the village was of a recognized Ngoni clan and where there was a nucleus of Ngoni clansmen, the individuals in Ngoni clans numbered from 25–75 per cent. of the total inhabitants, the average being about 45 per cent. In a number of the villages where no Ngoni clans were represented, the villagers nevertheless asserted, 'We are Ngoni, because we are the

[1] This collecting of village plans was viewed with some suspicion at first as a new way of helping the Government to catch tax defaulters. However, when I promised the Paramount Chief that no one in the locality should see the village plans, he sent out word that I was to be given all the information I needed, and no one need fear the consequences.

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

difference to-day between the attitude of the Ngoni to the Europeans and that of the Chewa, for example. In the vernacular expression the Ngoni say, 'The Europeans spoiled our country'; the Chewa say, 'The Europeans saved us'.

Chamtendere, then, was the period of Ngoni supremacy, when they established by force of arms their right to rule over the country and its indigenous inhabitants. There was, however, some difference between the political organization of the Ngoni as a conquering horde on the march, and their organization when they finally settled in their present areas. At both times the focus of their organization was warfare—they were a nation under arms. But once settled on land which they had chosen they began to spread a network of political organization over the country, and to plan in terms of 'countries'[1] instead of mobile villages. To-day when they discuss the advent of the Europeans and the consequent 'spoiling' of their country, they recall the days when extensive tribute was paid to their Paramount Chief, chiefs were free to choose good sites for their very big villages, the outlying areas were ruled by *indunas* and lesser chiefs. It was the partial breaking up of this centralized political organization which they regarded as 'spoiling their country', as well as the economic restrictions with regard to land and the prohibition of raiding for new supplies of cattle.

During this time of Ngoni supremacy Ngoni institutions flourished —those institutions which they had brought with them from the south and preserved through their wanderings. When they are telling to-day about these years they speak fervently and reverently of the part played by the Paramount Chief in every side of life, the training for warfare of all the young men, the instruction and supervision of young chiefs by old *indunas*, Ngoni marriage and initiation ceremonies. It was during this time in Mpezeni's country that the *Inqwala* or first fruits ceremony was regularly observed at Mtenguleni, the village of the mother of old Mpezeni.[2] At this ceremony the Paramount Chief 'opened' the new food season by the ritual eating of new fruits, especially young maize and pumpkins. It was also the

[1] i.e. chiefs' areas.

[2] The description of this *Inqwala* given by men and women who took part in it in their youth shows much similarity to the *Inqwala* of to-day among the Swazi.

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

84° F. and the mean minimum 61·5° F.[1] Three seasons are distinguished: the wet season, from the beginning of November until about April; the cold season, from May until July; and the hot season, from August until the rains begin again. Most of the planting takes place in the first half of the wet season, and the harvest comes after the rains have ceased. There is very little fishing, but antelopes, leopards, wild pig, and buck are hunted for their meat, and lions, leopards, hyenas, and monkeys on account of the damage they do to crops and livestock. The greater part of the region is free enough from tsetse fly to permit cattle-keeping, and for the tribe as a whole there is approximately one head of cattle to every two people. Pigs, sheep, goats, and chickens are also kept.

The material culture of the tribe is similar to that of their neighbours. They live in one- or two-roomed huts of bamboo or pole and mud; some women make pottery and some men make reed mats; all buy their clothes and their hoes from the shops.[2]

Three languages are used in the region: Ci-Ngoni, a language akin to Zulu, is now heard only in songs and royal praises; Ci-Nyanja is taught in the schools and is used for communication with Europeans and Indians; while the normal language used every day in the villages is a dialect of Ci-Nsenga.

I. THE STATE

Old Administrative System

The Ngoni think of themselves as different from their neighbours because of their chiefdomship. The other tribes do not, in the eyes of the Ngoni, possess the same kind of pyramidal and centralized organization which was characteristic of the régime of Mpezeni I and which persists in a modified form at the present time.

The important positions in the old political structure were occupied by members of the royal lineage, their queens, the regional governors,[3] and the lieutenants.[4] The political system was at the same time the territorial system, residence being determined by political allegiance. The pattern of residence and allegiance persisted despite the movement of the tribe as a whole from one region to another and despite

[1] Trapnell, *Ecological Survey*, pp. 2–3.
[2] See my *Material Culture of the Fort Jameson Ngoni*.
[3] *Mabwanamkulu*, pl. *abanamkulu*.
[4] *Nduna*, pl. *mduna*.

/3 cont'd/
a point some fifteen miles south of Fort Jameson. It seems likely 175
that another eastward move was being contemplated when in 1898
they clashed with troops from Nyasaland, and were defeated. Al-
ready the territory under the control of Mpezeni stretched across the 131
Luangwa-Shire watershed, and with the establishment of British rule
in the same year that portion of Mpezeni's domain lying across the
watershed became detached from the main portion which lay in
Northern Rhodesia. The Nyasaland section of the empire is now con- 631
trolled by two independent Ngoni chieftainships, both in the Fort
Manning area of Dlongwe District. In this Territory, the present
Paramount Chief is a great-grandson of the first Mpezeni.

/4/ Like all the Ngoni groups, Mpezeni's people are the result 648
of much intermariage between the southern migrants and the Central
Bantu people with whom they fought. In particular, Mpezeni's
Ngoni intermarried a great deal with the Nsenga of Petauke District,
and it is the Nsenga language that is spoken to-day in Ngoni villages, 197
rather than the old Ngoni language, akin to Zulu, which is used only
in praises and songs. Cicewa is spoken in some villages which at
the time of the arival of the Europeans had been incorporated only
a short time into the Ngoni state and had not had time to lose their
own Chewa tongue.

The principal difference between the Ngoni and their surround- 642 •
ing neighbours is in their form of centralised chieftainship, inherited
from father to son. Under the Paramount Chief are nine minor chiefs, 631
positions created by the British South Africa Company's administration,
and held by descendants in the male line of Zwangendaba and his
important officials. Until about 1920 there were divisional head-
men in charge of a number of villages, but these posts have now
disappeared. In a village there is a headman, an hereditary position 602
in the male line, and often one or two assistants, also hereditary 604
offices, descended from captives of the original headman who had
been promoted to responsible office.

In the old days one of the principal ways in which the diverse 701
elements within the Ngoni state were unified was through the regi-
mental system. Regiments were formed every so many years on a